THE CLOUD MAN'S CHANT

By Lieut. Merwin C. Bly

POISED for flight, like a startled bird,
My good ship, trembling, stands,
Eager to soar to realms unheard
At the guiding touch of my hands;
A symbol of man's mastery
Of the vast, uncharted, aërial sea.

A pull of the stick, a thrust of the rod,
And the creature leaps to its flight;
Ever so lightly it skims the sod,
Eager to reach the height;
On, with its steady, sputtering roar,
Up and up, to the white cloud-floor.

Right suddenly the world blots out,—
There's a damp, dank smell of steam,
A wet, white blanket winding about,
Fantastic, unreal as a dream;
A misty, moving, awful shroud
(For we're flying blind now through the cloud).

The cloud-gloom lightens, then swift gives way
To transient, filmy veils,
And swifter still these yield their sway,
As the great bird upward sails;
Endlessly stretched to eternity,
Lies the vast, aërial sea.

With waves upcurled, like giant scrolls
In pompous majesty,
The aërial ocean slow-billowing rolls
Where the cool, wet winds fare free,
And on a scene that is ever new
Shines down the sun from a pool of blue.

The vast, unchanging loneliness
Of limitless, objectless space
Rings round like a pressure merciless—
Stuns like a blow in the face.
(Hark! Only the motor's vibrant roar,
Like a muffled sound beyond a door.)

. . . . .

A forward thrust on the guiding stick,
And the white ship noses down,
In a clean-cut dive that is sure and quick,
Toward the warm, cloud-curtained ground;
Swiftly past the cloud-floor streams,
While the wire-cut wind like a demon screams.

Joyfully poised, like a home-come bird,
My good ship, trembling, stands,
Ready for rest when I give the word,
With a guiding touch of my hands;
Symbol of man's mastery
Of the vast, uncharted, aërial sea.

—Perfect Feet

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